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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined access and entry patterns of men and women superintendents to the public school superintendency in Washington State are presented in this paper. Factors that account for the increased number of women superintendents in Washington, as compared to the small number nationwide, are identified. Methodology involved: (1) completion of a background data questionnaire by a matched sample of 14 superintendents (7 men and 7 women) and 23 board members; (2) administration of the Attitude Research Instrument to school board members; (3) indepth interviews with superintendents and school board members; and (4) document analysis. Findings indicate that no significant difference existed between the attitudes held by school board members in districts headed by men and in those headed by women, and that no difference existed in the attitudes of male and female board members toward women administrators. Sponsorship, mobility, and a proper district/candidate match were strong predictors of success. Predictions are that the number of women superintendents in Washington will continue to increase (although males will continue to dominate), especially in small, rural districts. Seven suggestions for replication of the study are offered. (39 references) (LMI)

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ACCESS AND ENTRY TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENCY IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON: A COMPARISON BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

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THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

Prior to the fall of 1989, 24 women served as public school superintendents in a total 296 school districts in the State of Washington. In the fall of 1989 seven additional women assumed the superintendency in Washington public school districts--a one year increase of 23 percent in the number of women represented as chief executive officers in the public school system.

According to Sharrat, Gmelch, and Settles (1989), women applying for the superintendency made large gains in achieving the superintendency in 1989 compared to previous years. During 1988, women represented nine percent of successful superintendent hires, while in 1989, women comprised 21 percent of successful superintendent hires in Washington State.

In contrast, an American Association of School Administrator's (AASA) survey conducted in 1982, *The American School Superintendency*, the sixth in a series of nationwide surveys conducted by AASA, revealed less than two percent of the nation's superintendents were female. Women superintendents were outnumbered by men superintendents by approximately 82 to one nationwide.

By 1989, however, Ordovensky reported an increase to five percent in the rate of women superintendents nationwide. In his study women superintendents were outnumbered by their male counterparts by a ratio of approximately 40 to one nationwide. Schuster and Foote (1990) however, contend national figures place women in only 3.5 to four percent of all superintendencies in our nation's public schools.

Until the fall of 1989 figures for the State of Washington were only slightly improved.

In 1988-89 eight percent of Washington State's superintendents were female. The ratio was 11.3 male superintendents to one female superintendent. By fall 1989, in a single year, the percentage of women superintendents had risen from eight percent to nearly ten percent: one female superintendent to 9.5 male superintendents.

Studies of the superintendency are relatively scarce (Crowson, 1987), but increasing. There is some research about women superintendents and similarities and differences between men and women superintendents. Studies describing a comparison between men and women include works by Maienza (1986) who compared indicators which provide access to the superintendency for men and women and Young (1984) who surveyed several men and women superintendents to determine their job satisfaction. Bell and Chase (1988) conducted in-depth interviews with three women superintendents and their school board members to understand the complexity of gender issues which arise for women superintendents; and Frasher and Hardwick (1982) compared women superintendents to women business executives.

However, only a handful of studies are available on the school superintendency in the State of Washington and only two of these studies, Crandall (1985), and Stevens (1988), specifically target women administrators. Additional investigation is needed to assess the comparison between men and women and their access and entry to the superintendency in the State of Washington.

Statement of the Problem

The literature suggests there are differences such as sponsorship, mobility, work orientation and opportunity between men and women superintendents and in their access and entry patterns to the superintendency. Women are largely underrepresented in the ranks of superintendent compared to their male counterparts. Researchers consistently describe women applicants as victims of discrimination in their search for a superintendency. The problem is if the percentage of women superintendents nationally decreased from nine percent in 1950 to two

percent in 1982; and then increased slightly in 1990 to approximately four percent, why has the number of women superintendents in the State of Washington increased by 23 percent in one year?

Background of the Study

Writers describing men and women's access and entry patterns to the superintendency suggest there may be predictors of access. A review of the literature on access and entry patterns of superintendents describes at least eight common indicators or predictors of access and entry: (1) availability, (2) mobility, (3) sponsorship, (4) family influence, (5) opportunity, competence, aspiration, (6) career paths and career contingencies, (7) work orientation, and (8) district contextual factors.

Availability

Gall (1979) found the available talent pool for positions in educational leadership to be more limited among females than males. Ortiz and Marshall (1988) report that, despite an increase of women seeking doctorates in educational administration, women, unlike their male counterparts, typically do not use their degrees to further careers in public school administration. Studies by Jones and Montenegro (1982), Neidig (1980), and Marshall (1984) corroborate these findings.

Mobility

Much of the current literature in educational administration describes women as generally immobile and limited in administrative aspirations by family ties and responsibilities. Kanter (1982) concludes that women, more than men, tend to remain loyal to the work group rather than identify with the field as a whole and aspire to promotions which might cause them to leave local environments. Krchniak's (1977) survey of over 1,300 female educators in Illinois found 78 percent unwilling to relocate their homes in order to obtain an administrative position. Paddock (1981) found less than half the women willing to

move to new districts, while Carlson's (1972) research showed 65 percent of male superintendents willing to relocate.

Sponsorship

According to the literature, one of the most powerful predictors of women's access to the superintendency is sponsorship. Edson (1988) concludes that, because women pursue careers in a paradox of limelight and isolation, and because they often lack positive role models to show the way, female aspirants find the connection with an established sponsor in the field essential to career advancement. Kanter (1977) found that sponsors are effective for the success of men in organizations, and absolutely essential for women.

Studies by Valverde (1974), Wolcott (1973) and Schmid (1963) validate the importance of sponsorship. Valverde (1974) shows how sponsorship has operated to exclude women and minorities.

Family Influence

Family background appears to have an impact on the careers of women in school administration. In Maienza's (1986) comparison of men and women superintendents, she reports individuals learn early in life to react to power and opportunity. Sanchez (1984) found male and female superintendents consider themselves more like their fathers in character and personality. Both groups attribute career decisions to the influence of family and non-family role models.

Opportunity, Competence, and Aspiration

Three key predictors of access to the superintendency for women, according to Carlson and Schmuck (1981), are opportunity, competence, and aspiration. The authors contend the overwhelming number of men in higher levels of administration often makes it difficult for women to perceive themselves as credible in the role of superintendent.

However, measures of demonstrated competence neither differ appreciably between

populations of males and females (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974); nor do studies of administrators indicate that gender is a factor in competent leadership (Meskin, 1974). Women see themselves as competently performing in their jobs. One of the few gender differences found by Gross and Trask (1976) was that women perceived themselves as more competent in providing instructional leadership than their male counterparts.

Paddock (1981) hypothesized that, along with lower aspirations, women also have lower expectations for job and career satisfaction. Having made it in a man's world, Paddock suggests women expect little more than what they already have and are thus well satisfied with both job and career.

Career Paths and Career Contingencies

Gaertner (1981) revealed the strongest paths to the superintendency were: (1) specialist in instruction, to administrator of instruction, to assistant superintendent, to superintendent and, (2) secondary assistant principal, to high school principal, to superintendent. According to Ortiz and Marshall (1988), "The potency of the secondary principalship becomes clear; even minority women ascend from it" (p. 132).

Career contingencies, defined by Carlson and Schmuck (1981), are those "forces" at work which include visibility of the occupation, its appropriateness, and recognition of administrative performance.

Work Orientation

If a district is seeking instructional leadership, studies suggest women are perhaps the best superintendent candidates for this job role. In over 20 years investigators (Fischel and Pottker, 1973; Gross and Trask, 1964,1976; Meskin, 1974; and Wheatley, 1981) report women school administrators contribute to higher teacher performance and student achievement since they tend to take a more active stance toward instructional leadership.

District Contextual Factors

In addition to factors previously mentioned, district context might also be considered a predictor of access. Taylor (1971) found "all things being equal" school board members and superintendents in Connecticut preferred a male to a female for superintendent, and a male to a female for the position of high school principal. Ortiz and Marshall (1988) suggest, however, a shift in the number of women holding school board positions may signal the beginning of a higher valuation of women's abilities.

Need for the Study

What factors account for the increased number of women superintendents in the State of Washington? Is this a trend? Is it an anomaly? What can be determined about the access and entry for this new group of superintendents? Will the knowledge gained about this group of super-intendents be useful in preparing other men and women for access to the superintendency? To what degree does the composition of the school board and the local community play a role in determining selection criteria for the new superintendent? To what degree was gender an issue in hiring superintendents for the 1989-90 school year in the State of Washington?

Research Design

The research design selected for this study was descriptive. The nature of the questions generated for this study involved a comparison of the results of this study to other descriptive and qualitative studies in the field--primarily those of Maienza (1986), Valverde (1980), Snell (1980), and Taylor (1971). The basic design for the study follows the work of Maienza (1986) which consisted of a study of background variables gathered through questionnaires and a study of factors concerning predictors of access gleaned from in-depth interviews of ten men and ten women superintendents in four midwestern states. Maienza matched the sample according to location, enrollment and socioeconomic characteristics of the district.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of the study was the difficulty of "exact" district matches for socioeconomic conditions. When a choice had to be made, the decision for a match was based on geographic location and district enrollment, and then for socioeconomic background.

A second limitation was the number of subjects selected for study. Although the study included the population of women new to the superintendency in the State of Washington during a given year, a comparison to results from larger studies was made to establish consistency. These comparisons were possible because this study replicated methodology from prior studies and utilized previously established categories and definitions for the eight predictors of access to the superintendency. Additional studies of new superintendents in the State of Washington would verify whether this group of seven women and seven men are truly representative of the population of men and women superintendents over time.

Data Analysis

Results of survey questionnaires were analyzed in the context of previous literature on women and men in the superintendency. Data describing visibility and sponsorship in the lives and careers of the subjects were examined in the context of Kanter's description of structural elements in organizations related to access to management positions.

Data from typed transcripts of interviews with superintendents and school board members were examined in relation to the literature concerning the eight predictors of access to the superintendency. Both the qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed with special emphasis on the comparisons between and among superintendents by district political context, size, geographic location, and gender. Qualitative methods of comparative analysis (Lofland and Lofland (1984) were used to analyze interview data.

A t-test for independent groups was computed to measure male and female school board member attitudes on the Attitude Research Instrument (ARI) toward women in administrative

positions in public schools. A t-test for independent groups was also used to compare the attitudes of school board members of men superintendents with the attitudes of school board members of women superintendents toward women in administrative positions in the public schools.

Confidentiality

Current practice requires that participants be protected from identification in reports of research studies. Consistent with this practice,reports from this study use numerals for participants and their respective districts.

Report of the Study

This study consists of three sections. Section One has described the current status of women's access to the public superintendency nationally and in the State of Washington. Patterns of entry are described in context of eight predictors of access to the superintendency: (1) availability, (2) sponsorship, (3) mobility, (4) career paths and career contingencies, (5) opportunity, competence, and aspiration, (6) family influence, (7) work orientation, and (8) district contextual factors.

Further investigation is needed to understand the increase in the number of women superintendents in the State of Washington compared to national statistics. A general description of a study to investigate this increase in the number of women superintendents in the State of Washington was introduced in this section.

The methodology, research procedures, and data analysis procedures are discussed in Section Two. Section Three presents the summary and conclusions of the study, implications of the study, the theoretical, substantive, and practical significance of the study, and implications for further study.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine why the increase in the number of women superintendents in the State of Washington compared to the small number of women superintendents nationwide. This study examined access and entry to the public school superintendency in the State of Washington of 14 superintendents: seven men and seven women. Comparisons between the men and women superintendents were made within the framework of eight predictors of access to the superintendency: (1) availability, (2) mobility, (3) sponsorship, (4) career paths and career contingencies, (5) opportunity, aspiration, and competence, (6) family influence, (7) work orientation, and (8) district contextual factors.

This section includes a description of the study population, a description of data collection instruments, hypotheses, and a discussion of statistical tests and data analysis techniques.

Selection of the Population

Subjects for this study were selected from the population of superintendents new to the superintendency in the State of Washington in the fall of the 1989-90 school year. A total of 42 public school superintendents were hired (35 men and seven women). Thirty of the 42 superintendents (according to the Washington Association of School Administrators) were new to the superintendency, that is, they had no prior experience as superintendent.

This group of 30 new superintendents included seven women superintendents. The seven women were matched with seven new men superintendents. Ivan Settles, consultant for the Washington State School Directors Association, and Dick Wolfe, Gonzaga University, a consultant to school directors, assisted with the process of district matching. Because of the pool of 23 new male superintendents for 1989-90, it was suggested by the consultants that a fairly close match for district size and geographic location might be made.

Districts and superintendents were matched on the basis of contextual factors, e.g.,

enrollment, geographic location, and socioeconomic factors including economic base, community income level, and student ethnicity.

Approximately two school board members from each of the selected districts participated in the study. School board members were selected based on the following criteria: (1) school board chair at the time of the selection process; (2) longevity on the school board; (3) balance for viewpoint; and (4) a balance for gender when possible.

Data Collection Procedures

Six data collection procedures were used for this comparative study of men and women superintendents: (1) surveys of superintendents; (2) surveys of school board members; (3) the Attitude Research Instrument for school board members; (4) interviews with superintendents; (5) interviews with school board members; and (6) document collection including district job position notices and newspaper articles. Each instrument was matched with one or more of the eight predictors of access to the superintendency: (1) availability, (2) mobility, (3) sponsorship, (4) career paths and career contingencies, (5) family influence, (6) opportunity, competence, and aspiration, (7) work orientation, and (8) district contextual factors.

Survey Instrument Development

The survey for superintendents and school board members was patterned after the Background Data Questionnaire developed by Taylor (1971) in her study of attitudes of superintendents and school board members toward women in administrative positions. Modifications to each survey were made to incorporate some of the eight predictors of access to the superintendency. The survey instrument for superintendents included questions concerning identification of sponsors or mentors, background experience in teaching and administration, mobility factors, family influence, and job search strategies.

The survey instrument for school board members was amended to request data concerning tenure, longevity in the district, occupation, age, gender, and education level. This

survey instrument was also adapted from Taylor (1971). Background Data Questionnaires for school board members and superintendents were pilot tested in two districts prior to the study --a district on the east side of the state and a district on the west side of the state.

Attitude Research Instrument Development

The *Attitude Research Instrument* used in this study was developed by Ringness (1964) and subsequently used by Warwick (1964), and Taylor (1971) in similar investigations of attitudes toward women in administrative positions.

In a description of the instrument Warwick (1964) indicates the method of construction was one used by Edwards (1957) in reference to Likert-type scales. The procedure used in the development of the Attitude Research Instrument was as follows:

> An initial pool of items was obtained by asking teachers in-training and practicing teachers to suggest their positive and negative impressions of women in school administrative posts (defined as superintendents, principals or vice-principals, department heads, or supervisors.) The collected opinions yielded a total of 77 descriptive phrases from a sample of 225 subjects.
>
> Items were phrased in favorable or "positive" direction, and a card sort was devised for purposes of determining the social desirability value of each item. Twenty judges, graduate students in the School of Education, sorted the 77 items on ten levels of social desirability. Since ten males and ten females were employed as judges items for which a significant difference in the mean desirability or standard deviation was found were discarded. Items with a mean social desirability less than 2.5 and greater than 6.5 were also discarded as were items with a standard deviation of more than 2.5 (based on a ten-point scale.)
>
> The remaining 46 items were then resorted by ten males and ten females as to the degree of favorableness of the trait indicated by the item to successful operation in a school administrative post. No significant differences were found for items which distinguished between male and female opinion. Items with a mean greater than 3.5 (best score = 1.0) and standard deviation greater than 2.6 were discarded.
>
> An attitude scale was constructed with the remaining 36 items and administered to 225 graduate and upper division students in classes in Education or Educational Psychology. Choices of SA,A,N,D, or SD were provided. Data were employed to obtain discrimination coeffi-

> cients, and scalogram analysis was used. The ten items with lowest discrimination coefficients were discarded, leaving 26 items in the final scale. (Warwick, 1964)

Warwick explained the process used to determine the coefficients of internal consistency as a form of "split-half" reliability checking. This form was used because the scales could neither be readministered nor could equivalent forms of the scale be devised. To do this, Warwick devised two forms of the scale in order to assess attitudes toward women in administrative positions within the elementary or secondary school, and attitudes toward women in administrative positions attached to the central office staff.

The scales were administered to the teachers of a school system not involved in Warwick's Project 1913 (5-0443) study. Fifteen hundred usable dual scores were returned and analyzed. From this a random sample of 100 secondary school scales, together with the respective central office scales, were studied by Ringness (1964) to determine the coefficients of internal consistency. The following coefficients were obtained:

Elementary subjects:	
Own school administrative posts	.909
Central office administrative posts	.883
Secondary subjects:	
Own school administrative posts	.871
Central office administrative posts	.977

Warwick (1964) concluded the validity of the Attitude Research Instrument was empirically attested from the manner of collecting test items and the manner of analysis of the choice of items. Warwick also concluded the analysis indicated subjects do not respond differentially to their own school or central office scales. Differences in attitudes between the sexes and between elementary and secondary school levels appeared to be attested.

Construct validity existed, according to Warwick, since various studies have suggested the items chosen for inclusion on the scale were related to the work and success of school administrators. In attesting to the ability of those polled to generalize about women in school

administrative positions, Warwick concluded that only three percent of the sample of teachers used in the pilot study were unable or unwilling to make the generalizations. The larger portion of the sample actually did make the generalizations according to Warwick's analysis of means, standard deviations, and comparison of subsample groups. The Attitude Research Instrument was pilot tested in two school districts prior to the study.

Distribution of the Survey

Background Data Questionnaires for superintendents and school board members were handed to participants immediately following an in-depth interview. Participants were encouraged to complete the survey and return it at their earliest convenience. It was suggested to participants that the total time to complete the survey was from ten to 12 minutes.

Items on the survey were constructed to allow for a minimum of writing. Most responses could be circled or completed by one-word answers. Participants who did not return surveys within two weeks were sent follow-up letters. Some participants were sent two follow up letters of reminder. Thirty-seven of 40 participants completed and returned the survey for a 92.5 percent response rate.

Interview Guide Development

In-depth interviews with each of 14 superintendents and 26 school board members were conducted. Interview questions were open-ended. Questions for superintendents focused on job search strategies, sponsorship, perceived competence, family influence, work orientation, and gender issues. Each question was keyed to one of the eight predictors of access to the superintendency.

Questions for school board members stressed district contextual factors including: pre-selection conditions established by school boards, school board priorities for the new superintendent, community issues, and selection processes.

All sessions were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. Traditional qualitative

methods (Lofland and Lofland, 1984) were used to develop each interview guide. Interview guides were pilot tested in two school districts prior to the study.

Document Collection

Documents, including school district brochures advertizing the superintendent vacancy, some superintendent resumés, Washington State School Director Association records of applicant pools, and some newspaper accounts describing events leading to superintendent selection were collected to determine district contextual factors at the time of entry to the superintendency. Traditional qualitative methods (Lofland and Lofland, 1984) were used to analyze documents.

Hypothesis #1

Two hypotheses were developed for this study to assist in data collection and analysis with respect to district contextual factors involving the composition and attitudes of school boards. Each hypothesis was based on school board member opinions, measured by the Attitude Research Instrument (ARI), and was tied directly to school board member attitudes toward the selection of women to positions in public school administration.

To answer the question: Is there a difference in attitude toward women in administrative positions in public schools between school board members in men superintendent districts and between school board members in women superintendent districts, the following hypothesis was developed:

Null Hypothesis #1: There is no difference in attitude toward the selection of women to administrative positions in public schools between school board members of districts selecting women to the superintendency and between school board members of districts selecting men to the superintendency.

Hypothesis #2

To answer the question: Is there a difference in attitude toward the selection of women to

administrative positions in public schools between male and female school board members, the following hypothesis was developed:

Null Hypothesis #2: There is no difference in attitude toward the selection of women to administrative positions in public schools between men school board members and women school board members.

Statistical Tests

A t-test case II for independent groups was selected to measure school board attitudes toward women in administrative positions in public schools for composite scores on the Attitude Research Instrument.

The independent variables were school board member affiliation by superintendent district and school board member gender. Data were converted to interval data from composite Likert scale scores.

Data were then analyzed to determine whether the observed difference between the two sample means arose by chance or represents a true difference between the means of the two populations. The population to which the results of the t-test are to be inferred are the male and female school board members of the 14 selected districts in the State of Washington during the 1988-89 school year and the school board members of men and women superintendent districts during the 1988-89 school year.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using traditional qualitative and quantitative methods. Data were organized for analysis according to the eight predictors of access to the superintendency. Analysis was made based on comparisons between the seven men superintendents and the seven women superintendents. Analysis was also made based on attitudes of men and women school board members and on the attitudes of school board members of men superintendents compared to attitudes of school board members of women superintendents.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide a summary of the study, present additional conclusions, and discuss implications for further research. The section is divided into three parts. Part One, *Summary and Conclusions of the Study*, provides a summary of the results of the study and presents conclusions drawn from an analysis of the data. The second part, *Implications of the Study*, provides insights for better understanding access and entry to the public school superintendency for men and women. *Implications for Further Research* (Part Three), are presented in hopes of encouraging others to examine access and entry patterns to the superintendency utilizing multiple data collection methodology.

Summary and Conclusions of the Study

The summary and conclusions of the study are organized according to the eight predictors of access and entry to the superintendency: (1) availability, (2) mobility, (3) sponsorship, (4) family influence, (5) career paths and career contingencies, (6) opportunity, competence, and aspiration, (7) work orientation, and (8) district contextual factors.

1. Availability

A total of 492 applicants filed for 14 open superintendent positions. Fifty-four of 492 applicants were women, representing 11 percent of the applicant pool. Four hundred thirty-eight were men, representing 89 percent of the applicant pool. Two of 14 districts elected not to conduct statewide searches and hired from within. "In-house" male applicants were promoted to the superintendency in these two districts.

The percentage of women applicants (11.2 percent) for districts selecting women superintendents was comparable to the percentage of women applicants (10.8 percent) for districts selecting men superintendents.

Women and men superintendent applicants, exclusive of the two men promoted from

within their districts, averaged a similar number of applications. Women averaged 4.7 applications and men averaged 4.6 applications in their search for a superintendency. More women than men received their first choice job.

Of successful applicants for superintendent positions for the 1989-90 school year in the 42 districts in the state, 17 percent were female and 82.9 percent were male. When compared to the female applicant pool of 9.5 percent for the 42 districts, women experienced a greater rate of success than their male counterparts in achieving a superintendency.

While there are no definitive statistics concerning the numbers of women applicants to the superintendency nationally or in the State of Washington, one might draw some conclusions from data gathered for this study. Vacancies in the State of Washington over a period of four to five years have generally averaged 40 to 42 superintendent vacancies per year (Sharratt, Gmelch, and Settles, 1989). If these statistics hold in the future, and should vacancies continue to occur in small or rural districts, it can be assumed that women will continue to apply for these positions.

Women may continue to apply simply because of their availability and readiness to pursue the superintendency. From this study, and from other studies, we know that women are acquiring an increasing number of doctorates in educational administration (cited in Ortiz and Marshall, 1988). Because women are available for hire in the State of Washington, and better educated, their chances of earning the superintendency may be enhanced because of their interest in pursuing superintendencies in small districts.

Womens' belief that they "must earn their way", coupled with their background preparation and training, may make them the clear choice in rural districts where men may not be as qualified. Women earn their positions, then, by "default"--they are the best of the group. In no case was a women hired in districts with enrollments of 1,300 to 11,900 students. In fact, all 13 superintendents of districts averaging 1,300 to 11,900 students were men.

However, in districts averaging 140 to 1,179 students, women more often received their first-choice job. The answer may be that some were "over qualified" for the job based on both experience and education.

2. Mobility

Willingness to relocate to a distant community in the same state contributed to the hiring of the seven women to the superintendency. Unlike the studies of Kanter (1982) and Paddock (1981) which largely described women as immobile and unlikely to move to new districts, change responsibilities, and vary duties to further their careers; 86 percent of women superintendents in the study indicated a willingness to relocate to a distant community but within the same state for a superintendency. This compared to a 57 percent willingness on the part of the men superintendents to relocate.

Interviews with women superintendents indicated some were willing to establish two households and travel to maintain their availability to the superintendency. No men in the study said they had more than one household. Quality of life, district size, and family considerations were most often mentioned by men and women superintendents as factors influencing their selection of districts for application.

3. Sponsorship

Sponsorship continues to be a key predictor to access to the superintendency for both men and women. However, if a woman does not receive the sponsorship of a male superintendent, her chances for advancement may not be as limited as the literature suggests. Background Data Questionnaire results from the superintendent survey revealed 100 percent of men superintendents and 71 percent of women superintendents in the study reported receiving guidance and support from a sponsor or mentor. Men superintendents averaged 2.4 sponsors each while women superintendents averaged 4.4 sponsors each.

Edson (1988) concludes that because women pursue careers in a paradox of limelight

and isolation and because they often lack positive role models to show the way, female aspirants find the connection with an established sponsor in the field essential to career advancement. Although women averaged more sponsors than their male counterparts, two women superintendents reported no sponsorship or mentorship and three females and one male superintendent rejected traditional "networking".

DiBella, Eckstrom, and Tobias (1977) state, although male mentors, both at the university and district level, play a meaningful role for female aspirants, female sponsors can be especially important. In this study, however, men reported 100 percent of their sponsors were male and women reported 97 percent of their sponsors were male. Sponsors and mentors were most often superintendents, mentioned 11 times by the 14 superintendents. Other sponsors or mentors most often mentioned were search coordinators, Educational Service District superintendents, colleagues, and university professors.

Two women in this study gained access to the superintendency without the benefit of sponsorship and networking. In fact, these women prided themselves on acquiring their positions without assistance from the "good old boys" and openly rejected the notion of networking. Additional studies are needed to determine whether this is a trend or simply characteristic of a portion of this population. Also, it may be that sponsorship may not be as important in acquiring a superintendency in a small district as it may be in a larger district.

4. Family Influence Data

Women superintendents came from higher socio-economic status homes than their male counterparts. Familial expectations and role models may have accounted to some degree for the success of these women in achieving the superintendency.

Unlike Maienza's study (1986), where 90 percent of fathers of superintendents were in white collar occupations or in business for themselves, only 28.6 percent of fathers of men superintendents were professional, managerial, or small business owners compared to 71.4

percent of fathers of women superintendents. Parents of men superintendents averaged a greater degree of education than parents of women superintendents. Seventy-nine percent of parents of women superintendents completed some college to graduate work compared to 86 percent of parents of men superintendents completing some college or graduate work.

The incidence of being firstborn was not as great among respondents as it was in the widely cited Hennig study of women executives in Fortune 500 companies (cited in Frasher, Frasher and Hardwick, 1982). However, 57 percent of men and women superintendents in this study were firstborn. This result is similar to the 60 percent firstborn rate of superintendents in Maienza's (1986) study. Both men and women came from average-sized families with 43 percent either the second or third child.

5. Career Paths and Career Contingencies

Gaertner (1981) found the two most potent paths to the superintendency to be: (1) specialist in instruction, to administrator of instruction, to assistant superintendent and then to superintendent, and, (2) secondary assistant principal, to secondary principal, and then to superintendent.

With the exception of one superintendent, the career path to the superintendency for men superintendents was achieved by working through the secondary principalship. However, no women held secondary school principalships. Prior to the superintendency, womenly largely held central office positions such as: curriculum coordinator, business manager, grants manager, or director of special services.

Nearly all women entered the superintendency from central office positions. The uniqueness of these experiences (business manager, grants manager) may have prepared them to meet district challenges generally not previously associated with women.

Consistent with the 1982 American Association of School Administrator's survey of the nation's superintendents, more women than men held doctorates. Men superintendents averaged

more years of classroom teaching experience, however, women averaged more years administrative experience prior to obtaining the superintendency.

While 71 percent of men superintendents were married, only 57 percent of women superintendents were married with 43 percent divorced. Men had more children than women superintendents. Three women superintendents had no children. Ninety-two percent of children of men superintendents were between the ages of five and 18 years of age compared to 56 percent of children of women superintendents. Forty-four percent of children of women superintendents were 19 years of age or older. Men were younger than women at the time of their first superintendency.

This profile of women superintendents is not atypical. Clearly, women were more independent due to the absence of children and, in 43 percent of the cases, the absence of a spouse. This profile of independence contributed to their self-selection to rural districts and their eventual hire.

6. Opportunity, Competence and Aspiration

The women in this study are superintendents today because, like their male counterparts, they seized the opportunity, believed themselves competent to perform the job, and consciously planned for their advancement in educational administration. Women held aspirations to the superintendency longer than their male counterparts. They were also more qualified for their position because of the length of their administrative experience.

Carlson and Schmuck (1981) believe a particular job is not a random selection among millions of jobs but develops, instead, from the possibilities presented at critical junctures. The three important personal contingencies: (1) perceived opportunities, (2) competence, and (3) aspirations greatly influence an individual's ability to successfully acquire an administrative position.

Results of this study reveal slight differences between men and women superintendents

with respect to opportunity, competence, and aspiration. Men and women superintendents identified similar feelings about becoming convinced at various points throughout their career that they could, in fact, perform the work of a superintendent. Women appeared to be convinced at an earlier time that they had the skills to be a superintendent. Men shared they did not always believe they had the skills necessary to be superintendent but described it as an evolution, seized opportunity, and the encouragement of others which made it possible for them to believe they could, in fact, be superintendents.

7. Work Orientation

Non-traditional orientation and experience in finance and construction provided women with an unusual match of abilities to local district needs. Although Wheatley (1981) and Pitner (1981) report women administrators take a more active stance toward instructional leadership, women superintendents in this study more often identified their primary work as construction and finance. Seventy-one percent of men superintendents specifically mentioned curriculum as a priority, and only 28 percent of women superintendents mentioned curriculum as a priority.

Given the unusualness of the womens' work orientation, it is highly possible their work was already defined or influenced by the "challenges" of the selecting districts. There may not have been a conscious choice on the part of the women to engage in construction and finance had districts not advertized this need.

8. District Contextual Factors

Several contextual factors appear to contribute to the success of women in obtaining superintendencies in the State of Washington:

(1) Women were more inclined to be selected to the superin-tendency by school boards with high percentages of professional and managerial members. School board members of men and women superintendents were comparable with respect to their

appointment and election to the board, length of service on the board, offices held, educational background and supervision. Fifty percent of board members of men superintendents held professional or managerial positions or were small business owners compared to 100 percent of board members of women superintendents in these occupations.

(2) Women in this study were more inclined to be selected to the superin tendency if they pursued positions in the western portion of the state. Districts were fairly evenly spread with respect to geographic location, however, women were more inclined to receive superintendencies in the western part of the state than in areas of the south and east. Enrollment averages for districts of men superintendents in the study were greater than the enrollment average for districts of women superintendents.

(3) Women who avoided agricultural based communities, whose constituencies often hold biases toward women in administrative positions, were more successful in their superintendent search. The greatest percentage of men superintendent districts were located in agricultural based communities (43%). Women superintendent districts reported recreation, fishing, and timber as primary industries.

(4) Women who avoided applications to districts where previous women administrators were considered "failures" were more inclined to receive fair consideration for superintendent positions. In two of 14 districts school boards made a conscious decision not to hire a woman as superintendent based on prior negative experiences with women as elementary principals. In two other districts, two women were omitted from applicant lists by screening committees. These women were eventually selected by school boards for the superintendency. Some superintendents and school board members referred to screening committees as "old boy networks" sometimes biased against both men and women candidates.

(5) Women who sought superintendencies where there was a greater

percentage of women serving on the school board were more likely to be selected. In 1974, the National School Boards Association reported women held 11.9 percent of the nation's school board positions. In 1984 the *School Board News* revealed the presence of women on America's school boards rose by nearly nine percent to a high of 20.9 percent.

In this study, women school board members comprised 42.4 percent of school boards selecting men superintendents and 45.7 percent of school boards selecting women superintendents.

(6) Women who experienced blatant discrimination in their search for the superintendency by school boards, community, and screening committees and who were prepared to counter comments, questions, and stereotypes with strong stances were successful in achieving the superintendency. Edson (1988) suggests that even if a female educator gets beyond the biases of her male and sometimes, female peers, she must face those of the community. Results of the study are consistent with Edson's research. One hundred percent of women superintendents believed gender was an issue to some degree in the superintendent selection process. In addition, 65 percent of all school board members interviewed indicated gender was a discussion item at some point in the selection process.

However, results of the Attitude Research Instrument revealed no significant difference between attitudes of school board members of men superintendents (Mean = 64.0) and school board members of women superintendents (Mean = 61.6) toward the employment of women as public school administrators.

Similarly, there was no significant difference in the attitudes of men school board members (Mean = 59.1), compared to attitudes of women school board members (Mean = 64.5), toward women in positions of public school administration as measured by the Attitude Research Instrument.

These results are in contrast to comments made during individual interviews. It may be that differences do exist, but the number of respondents was not adequate to yield a significant difference. It may also be that individuals respond more candidly to an informal interview than to a formalized survey instrument.

7. Women with nontraditional backgrounds and interests benefited from matching their abilities with the needs of the district. One hundred percent of women superintendent districts listed facilities planning as a major challenge compared to 28.6 percent of men superintendent districts. Fifty-seven percent of men superintendent districts listed "marketing the school district" as a challenge compared to 14.3 percent of districts of women superintendents.

Contrary to the work of March and March (1977), the selection and movement of applicants to superintendencies is not a random event, but rather, a carefully calculated move on the part of both school boards and aspirants. Both superintendents and school board members describe the selection process as a "match" or "marriage" between the skills of the candidate and the needs of the district.

Implications of the Study

The implications of the study are presented in two sections. The first section addresses the issue of how the study explains the increase in the number of women superintendents in the State of Washington compared to the number of women superintendents nationwide, and the second section examines the implications for access and entry to the superintendency for men and women.

This study suggests a number of factors may account for the increased number of women superintendents in the State of Washington compared to national trends. One such factor was the increased number of women school board members compared to national figures. Again, reflecting on the national increase of women in school board positions, Ortiz and Marshall

(1988) suggest that if the shift truly reflects women's concerns for education, it may signal the beginning of new conceptions of leadership, including a higher valuation of women's abilities. In this study women comprised nearly 45 percent of school board membership.

A second factor which may have contributed to an increased number of women superintendents in the State of Washington was the degree of their availability. The applicant pool of women candidates for the superintendency in the 14 selected districts was nearly 11 percent. Since 1986 the number of women superintendents in the State of Washington has averaged nine percent per year compared to the Jones and Montenegro (1985) statistic of 2.7 percent nationwide and Schuster and Foote's (1990) national figure of four percent women superintendents nationwide. In this study women were hired at nearly twice the rate of their availability.

A third factor which may explain the increase in the number of women superintendents in the State of Washington compared to national statistics was the profile of women superintendents which made them more "like" their male counterparts. Women in the study demonstrated greater mobility patterns, earned more advanced degrees, more often used male sponsors or mentors to help them advance to the superintendency, were more often divorced and had a greater percentage of grown children than their male counterparts, thus making it easier for them to assume the role and responsibilities of superintendent.

As noted previoiusly, this study suggests the selection of superintendents was not a random exercise (March and March,1977). Rather, the evidence suggests superintendent selection by school board members is an issue of correct "match" between district needs and superintendent qualifications. As such, it would seem that applicants could more carefully plan superintendent search strategies to match their qualifications and skills with individual district needs. For example, several women in this study achieved the superintendency due to their background and experience in construction and finance.

Even in 1990 blatant discrimination against women in educational administration was

apparent. Women cannot be naive to assume that gender discrimination will not be part of the superintendent search process.

If a woman is released from an administrative position in a district this generally foreshadows the rejection of additional women to administrative positions--particularly in smaller sized districts.

Although gender was an issue for many women superintendents and school board members, this study suggests both school board members and women superintendents utilized strategies to minimize the effects of gender issues on selection. In two cases, school board members ignored recommendations of screening committees and placed qualified women on the interview list. In other situations, school boards acknowledged the concerns of the community which did not want a woman selected to the superintendency. These school boards, however, expressed determination to hire the best possible candidate and selected female over male applicants.

Women superintendents acknowledged gender bias but persevered in their pursuit of the superintendency by largely ignoring the issues on a personal level and continuing in their pursuit of the superintendency.

The study suggests there is no significant difference in the attitudes of school board members of women superintendents compared to the attitudes of school board members of men superintendents toward women in positions of public school administrators. The study also suggests that, although mean scores for men school board members and women school board members toward women in public school administration were different, the differences were not significant.

Data also suggest both men and women superintendents targeted their superintendent search by district enrollment and geographic location. In some cases, women selected only one or two districts and actively pursued these in their search for a superintendency. This was evi-

denced by the fact that 71.4 percent of women received their first choice job. Targeting or focusing specific jobs appeared to be an effective strategy for obtaining a superintendency.

Finally, in addition to targeting specific district superintendencies, women consciously positioned themselves for superintendencies by completing doctoral programs and coursework leading to the superintendent certificate. Women in this study selected some non-traditional paths to the superintendency: business manager, grants manager, state level education positions and assistant superintendencies; yet 71.4 percent of women in the study held the position of "assistant superintendent" compared to 14 percent of men superintendents who held the title "assistant superintendent."

What, then, are the implications for access and entry to the superintendency for men and women in the State of Washington? It can be assumed that women will continue to lag behind men in hiring for public school superintendencies. However, women are gaining ground by virtue of their determination and increased availability.

Also, it is likely women will continue to be selected for small, rural, school districts. It is not likely, at least in the near future, that women will be selected for large school district superintendencies because they lack superintendent experience and because of their own self-selection into small, rural districts--feeling they must "pay their dues" before moving on to a larger district.

It is anticipated that gender will continue to be an issue for women applicants in their pursuit of a superintendency, however, there is some evidence that school boards, because of their male-female ratios and independence, will exert their own desires over the recommendations of the screening committee.

It is possible an increasing number of men and women applicants will continue to reject the notion of the "old boys network" and develop other strategies for accessing the superintendency. It is also possible an increasing number of school boards will also reject the notion of

the "old boys network" and become increasingly more independent in the selection of superintendent candidate finalists.

Because of the strong emphasis on a proper "match", aspirants will want to spend more time assessing district needs, preparing letters of application, and aligning their skills and experience more closely with district priorities.

Sponsorship and mobility will continue to be strong predictors of access to the superintendency for both men and women aspirants. Although a few superintendents preferred to acquire the job "on their own," most acknowledged the importance of sponsorship while rejecting the "old boys network."

Provided the ratio of women school board members continues to increase in the State of Washington, it is likely that previously male dominated school boards will give way to growing numbers of women board members who may place a higher value on the abilities of women to hold superintendencies or who may influence their fellow board members to consider women applicants.

Implications for Further Study

Limitations of this study imply the need to further examine access and entry patterns for men and women superintendents to the public school superintendency in the State of Washington. This study describes a specific population of superintendents hired in the state for the 1989-90 school year. It would be important to produce studies which replicate this study and focus on other groupings of men and women superintendents new to the superintendency. The following are recommendations for further study:

1. Replications of this study could be completed on a yearly basis in a simpler format. A replication of this study would allow for a comparison of this group of men and women superintendents with groups hired in subsequent years to determine whether access and entry patterns vary from year to year or from population to population.

2. To increase sample size and to determine significant differences in populations, all school board members involved in superintendent selection should complete the Background Data Questionnaire and the Attitude Research Instrument. These instruments should not be limited to one or two school board members per district. Results would verify, with a larger population, whether there are significant differences in the attitudes of men and women school board members toward women in positions of educational administration.

3. Similar studies concerning access and entry patterns in other states with an equal number of women represented in the superintendency might be conducted to determine whether there are similarities in the predictors of access between states.

4. By replicating this study in more than one state with similar percentages of women superintendents, it may be possible to index a series of predictors of access to the superintendency thus making it possible for both men and women aspirants to predict their likelihood of success in obtaining a superintendency.

5. A new instrument to replace the Attitude Research Instrument might be constructed for use in studies concerning attitudes towards women in the public school superintendency. The Attitude Research Instrument is somewhat dated. Some school board members found questions concerning attitudes towards women to be "offensive" to them personally in light of Title IX legislation.

6. The qualitative portion of the study of access and entry to the superintendency should be retained. This is a valuable tool for determining district contextual factors and for broadening understanding with respect to the predictors of access.

7. Additional studies might address questions such as: What are the socialization patterns of men and women aspiring to the superintendency? Are there other predictors of access to the superintendency which might be studied? Are there differences in predictors of access for districts which do not advertize the superintendency compared to

districts who widely advertize the superintendency? and, Are there differences in predictors of access to the superintendency for larger districts?

Because the number of superintendent vacancies in the State of Washington is predicted to increase substantially over the next five to ten years (Reid, 1989), a study of the predictors of access and entry to the superintendency may provide assistance to both school boards and aspi rants to the superintendency. School boards may benefit from the opportunity to review current selection practices. Aspirants, and women applicants in particular, may benefit from the experiences of those who successfully preceded them to the superintendency.

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